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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/13): Palestinians exert every effort for a vote on the Goldstone report at the UN Security Council

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Main Stories:  
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All three dailies report on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks at the opening session of the Knesset yesterday. Netanyahu renewed his call for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state for the Jewish people. He also heavily criticized the Goldstone report and said that it encourages terrorism and doesn't promote peace in the region. Netanyahu reiterated that he will not allow any Israeli soldier or political leader to be accused of or punished for war crimes. He noted that the report denies the right of Israel to defend itself and stressed that he will exert every effort to ensure that the vote on the report at the UN Security Council on Wednesday fails.

In reaction to Netanyahu's remarks, Palestinian Authority (PA) Presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeina noted to the press that Netanyahu is only wasting time and evading responsibility. He also noted that Netanyahu doesn't recognize the rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state with Jerusalem its capital.

The dailies also report on the PA's efforts to ensure a vote on the Goldstone report during the UN Security Council session on Wednesday. PA Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Malki will travel to New York today to attend the UNSC session and will give a speech to condemn the Israeli attacks against Al-Aqsa and East Jerusalem. He will also discuss the Goldstone report.

News on Palestinian national reconciliation efforts continues to receive prominent coverage in the local press. The reports note that Fatah approved the modified Egyptian proposal for national reconciliation. The reports also note that Egypt gave Hamas 48 hours

to submit their final response on the proposal.

The dailies report on the PA weekly ministerial cabinet meeting yesterday in Ramallah. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad urged the international community to force Israel to stop its attacks against Jerusalem. The cabinet noted that despite the importance of Special Envoy George Mitchell's recent visit to the region, he wasn't able to achieve any tangible progress towards the resumption of negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis because of Israeli stubbornness and rejection to halt settlement activities.

The local press reports on the Israeli authorities demolishing four houses in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Beit-Hanina yesterday due to the lack of appropriate building permits under full protection of the Israeli police.

Monday, October 12:

The dailies reported on PA President Mahmoud Abbas' speech in which he explained the details surrounding the PA's decision to postpone the vote on the Goldstone report at the UN Human Rights Council. Abbas also accused Hamas of taking advantage of the repercussions of the postponement to evade signing the national reconciliation agreement.

The dailies also report on the Head of the Hamas political bureau Khaled Mish'al's speech on Sunday. Mish'al criticized the PA for postponing the Goldstone report and noted that the Palestinian Liberation Organizatoin should be restructured. He also accused the

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Obama administration of being biased to Israel.

The dailies report on member of the Fatah Central Committee, Muhammad Dahlan, noting that Fatah is extremely disappointed and concerned about the reversal of the US position regarding the peace process. He added that Fatah is also concerned about the US silence towards the Israeli measures in East Jerusalem and its attacks against Al-Aqsa Mosque. He called on President Obama to immediately intervene and rescue the peace process by imposing a complete freeze of settlement activities.

The dailies report on Special Envoy George Mitchell concluding his trip to Israel and the Palestinian Authority without achieving any tangible movement toward the resumption of negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Weekend Stories:

Sunday, October 11,

All three dailies carry front page news on Hamas confirming that its delegation in Cairo has finished its discussions with Egyptian officials regarding the national reconciliation agreement. Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhoum said that "Hamas expressed its desire to postpone the signing of the agreement," noting that Cairo understood the reasons behind the postponement, primarily because the atmosphere is not appropriate for signing the agreement. Barhoum added that "it is very difficult for Hamas to ignore the public reaction to the postponement of the vote on the Goldstone report." Salah Al Bardawil, a leading figure of Hamas, said that Egypt agreed to postpone the signing until after Eid Al Adha.

The three dailies report that the UN Human Rights Council is expected to convene an emergency session to discuss the Goldstone report within the next two weeks. Palestinian Ambassador Ibrahim Khreisheh is conducting meetings with the various parties within the Council to convene this emergency session upon the request of President Abbas. Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erekat announced that the PA will re-submit the report to the UN Human Rights Council for a re-vote. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its readiness to launch an international diplomatic campaign against the vote, according to coverage.

The local press highlight Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's meeting with Special Envoy George Mitchell. Dr. Ghassan Al Khatib, Director of

the Government Media Center, said that Fayyad reiterated the Palestinian position calling on Israel to freeze all settlement activities to create a positive atmosphere for the resumption of negotiations. Al Khatib added that Senator Mitchell is seeking the resumption of negotiations as soon as possible.

Saturday, October 10:

The three dailies lead with stories about Friday's protests and condemnations of the Israeli restrictions imposed on Jerusalem and Al Aqsa Mosque. A general strike was observed in all West Bank governorates. Jerusalem mosques were overcrowded with young worshippers, hundreds of whom were forced to pray in the streets after being banned from entering Al Aqsa Mosque. Despite the deployment of thousands of police in the vicinity of Al Aqsa Mosque, some clashes erupted between young Palestinians and these forces. Israel relaxed the restrictions on Friday afternoon and opened all of the gates leading to Al Aqsa Mosque, thus allowing worshippers to

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enter.

The local press highlights Special Envoy George Mitchell's announcement that he invited Palestinian and Israeli officials to continue consultations with him in Washington. Mitchell said in a statement to journalists following his meeting with President Abbas, "I have had a very good meeting with President Abbas during which we discussed our shared vision of establishing an independent, viable, and geographically congruent Palestinian state." Mitchell also added that "President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton are personally and deeply interested in achieving this objective" saying that the "only and most practical solution for this conflict is to fulfil the dreams of both parties and for the parties to live side by side in peace, security, stability, and prosperity." President Abbas told Mitchell that talk about resuming peace negotiations cannot take place prior to the complete freeze of settlement activities, particularly in Jerusalem, and prior to defining clear terms of reference for these negotiations.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Fadwa Al-Barghouti opines in Al-Quds independent daily under the title "Obama's first failure in the New York Summit" (10/13): "Obama's remarks after the trilateral meeting in New York and Mitchell's most recent remarks show that the US president failed his first test and has wasted the first 8 months of his administration in useless negotiations with the Israeli government. He also reversed some of his positions ... obviously there are limits to US pressure on Israel."

2) Abdallah Al-Itibi opines in Al-Quds independent daily under the title "Obama and Palestine: impressive statements and bitter decisions" (10/13): "Obama has to know that US leadership and its influence on the entire world should not be based on election slogans, but rather on presidential decisions ... If he wants to be an exceptional president, he should not only be satisfied with speeches and words, but has to follow this with actions."

RUBINSTEIN